

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Secured Assembly Seating

Learning objective: The student shall be able to determine when secured seating is required in a place of public assembly.

The accompanying picture illustrates a common public seating arrangement in a large place of assembly without fixed seats.

If all these loose seats were occupied and an emergency occurred, the potential is high that escaping persons would scatter chairs in their haste to leave, thereby creating obstructions to smooth and timely egress.

To minimize the likelihood that seats will be disturbed and disrupt egress paths, the model fire codes require that in places of public assembly without ramped or tiered floors and with more than 200 seats, the chairs should be secured together in groups of at least three or they should be secured to the floor. The NFPA codes do not require that more than seven chairs be bonded to one another.

Securing the seats together is intended to make it less likely chairs will be scattered, and more likely that occupants will follow the defined egress patterns.

The joined or bonded seats must be installed with aisles and cross aisles leading to exits in accordance with the codes. The dimensions for these aisles, and the required distance between the front of one seat and the back of another, depend upon the number of seats and whether occupants have two means of access to the aisles.



Seating diagrams with minimum aisle widths are an important adjunct to permits for places of public assembly. All potential configurations should be submitted to the code official for review and approval prior to issuing the assembly permit.

For additional information, refer to *International Fire Code*[®], Chapter 10; *NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code*[™], Chapter 20; or *NFPA 101*[™], *Life Safety Code*[®], Chapters 12 and 13.